

***Aster sibiricus* L. var. *meritus* (A.Nels.) Raup.**
arctic aster
Asteraceae (Aster Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G5T5S1S2

General Description: Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1955): This rhizomatous perennial is commonly 4 in. (10 cm) tall or less, but in robust forms can be up to 16 in. (40 cm) tall. The stem and lower surfaces of the leaves are sparsely to copiously short-haired. The leaves are firm, with a few small teeth or entire, sessile or the lower ones subpetiolate, 1 to 3 in. (2½ to 8 cm) long, 1/8 to 1 in. (4 to 25 mm) wide, and the very lowermost are usually more or less reduced. The heads are solitary or few, and rarely up to 20 in a compact inflorescence. The involucre is ¼ in. (6 to 9 mm) high. The margins of the involucre bracts more or less overlap in several series. The involucre bracts are loose and sometimes a little spreading or sharply curved downward or outward at some point above the base, papery in texture, opaque and thin below, evidently to obscurely green-tipped, and more or less strongly purple-margined or suffused with purple. There are most often 12-23 purple rays that are ¼ to ½ in. (8 to 12 mm) long. The pappus has some shorter and more slender bristles of various lengths intermixed. The disk corollas are ½ in. (5 ½ to 7 ½ mm) long, sometimes dry, and the tube of the disk corollas equal or are a little longer than the slender limb.

Identification Tips: *Aster sibiricus* var. *meritus* is most closely related to *A. radulinus*. These two species can be distinguished by their height, number of heads, leaf margins, rays, and involucre bracts. *A. sibiricus* is typically less than 20 cm tall and single headed (but sometimes more robust), with toothed to entire leaves, purple rays, and involucre bracts that are more or less suffused with blue, purple, or red pigments at the margins and tips. *A. radulinus* is a well developed erect plant that is 20 to 70 cm tall and many headed with mostly conspicuously toothed leaves, white to purple rays, and involucre bracts that are with or without blue, purple, or red pigments.

Phenology: Flowers from July to mid-September.

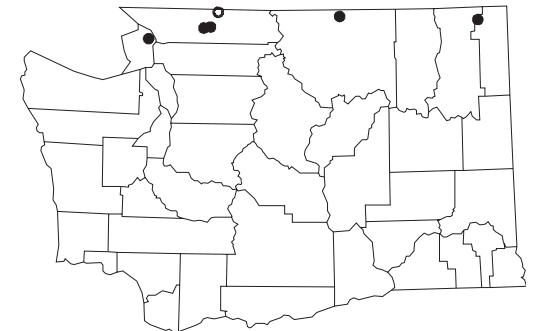
Range: This circumboreal taxon extends southward from British Columbia and Alberta to Oregon, Idaho, and Wyoming. Populations are scattered in Washington. This species has been identified in Whatcom, San Juan, Okanogan, and Stevens counties.

Aster sibiricus* L. var. *meritus
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Known distribution of *Aster sibiricus* v *meritus* in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Habitat: This species grows in open, rocky places, rock crevices, and unstable slopes, mostly at high elevations in the mountains. In Washington, *A. sibiricus* var. *meritus* has been found from 2400 to 7382 ft (731 to 2250 m) elevation. Associated species include field chickweed (*Cerastium arvense*), shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*), slender wheatgrass (*Agropyron caninum*), sedges (*Carex* spp.), harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), spreading phlox (*Phlox diffusa*), valerian (*Valeriana* spp.), and coral bells (*Heuchera* spp.).

Ecology: The population on Mt. Constitution in San Juan County is the only population in the state occurring below subalpine elevations.

State Status Comments: There are six known occurrences. The taxon was not relocated at two of the known sites in the state that were visited within the last 10 years.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory is needed to determine the actual range and abundance in the state. Documented occurrences should be re-visited.

Threats and Management Concerns: Definite threats have not been identified for this species. However, the small range of this taxon in Washington and the small number of known occurrences are major concerns. Any disturbance to the immediate habitat may constitute a threat. Some populations are on unstable talus.

Comments: *Aster sibiricus* var. *meritus* is a synonym for *Eurybia merita* (A. Nels.) Nesom.

References:

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1955. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 5: Compositae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 343 pp.

